

IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows:

Claim 1 (Currently Amended): A method for manufacturing a reduced metal, comprising the steps of:

thermally reducing a metal oxide including a carbonaceous reductant disposed on a hearth moving in a reducing furnace, thereby producing a combustible gas from the thermal reduction of the metal oxide;

supplying fuel and primary combustion air to the reducing furnace via a plurality of primary burners, and

supplying secondary combustion air to the reducing furnace via a plurality of secondary burners at a location to combust the combustible gas from the thermal reduction of the metal oxide,

wherein at least the secondary combustion air is oxygen-enriched air, and the oxygen concentration in the primary combustion air is controlled to be lower than the oxygen concentration in the secondary combustion air.

Claim 2 (Original): The method for manufacturing a reduced metal according to claim 1, wherein the CO concentration in the atmospheric gas in the furnace in the vicinity of at least one of the plurality of primary burners is less than 2 volume percent.

Claim 3 (Original): The method for manufacturing a reduced metal according to claim 1, wherein the CO concentration in the atmospheric gas in the furnace in the vicinity of at least one of the plurality of primary burners is less than 4 volume percent.

Claim 4 (Original): The method for manufacturing a reduced metal according to claim 1, wherein a degree of reduction represented by the formula $(\text{CO} + \text{H}_2) / (\text{CO} + \text{CO}_2 + \text{H}_2 + \text{H}_2\text{O})$ in the atmospheric gas in the furnace in the vicinity of at least one of the plurality of primary burners is less than 0.05.

Claim 5 (Original): The method for manufacturing a reduced metal according to claim 1, wherein at least one of the plurality of primary burners has an air ratio of 1.0 or less.

Claim 6 (Original): The method for manufacturing a reduced metal according to claim 1, wherein the plurality of primary burners has different air ratios.

Claim 7 (Previously Presented): The method for manufacturing a reduced metal according to claim 1, wherein the thermally reducing step is performed in a reducing atmosphere.